

Message Text

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SUBJECT: EC RESEARCH COUNCIL DECEMBER 15: ITALIANS BLOCK AGREEMENT
ON JOINT EUROPEAN TORUS PROJECT

REF: EC BRUSSELS 11244 (NOTAL)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THE EC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS HELD A SESSION DEVOTED TO RESEARCH IN BRUSSELS ON DECEMBER 15. THE MINISTERS CONSIDERED THE COMMISSION'S OBJECTIVES FOR THE COMMUNITY'S JOINT RESEARCH CENTER (JRC) FOR THE PERIOD 1976-80. THE JRC CAME IN FOR CONSIDERABLE CRITICISM ON EFFICIENCY GROUNDS. THE EC COMMISSION IS TO REVISE ITS SUGGESTIONS FOR JRC ACTIVITIES IN LIGHT OF THE COUNCIL'S DISCUSSIONS. THE ITALIAN DELEGATION BLOCKED ANY AGREEMENT ON THE JOINT EUROPEAN TORUS (JET) SAYING THAT THEY WOULD NOT CONSENT TO GO AHEAD WITH THE PROJECT AT THISTIME UNLESS IT WAS AGREED TO CO-LOCATE THE JET WITH THE JRC FACILITY AT ISPRA. AFTER WORKING UNTIL AFTER MIDNIGHT TO TRY AND FIND A COMPROMISE, THE MINISTERS GAVE UP AND DID NOT EVEN DEAL WITH THE OTHER ITEMS ON THEIR AGENDA. OUR SOURCES INDICATE THERE WAS NO DISCUSSION OF RESUSCITATING THE EC'S DRAGON REACTOR. END SUMMARY.

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2. PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE JOINT EUROPEAN RESEARCH PROGRAM FOR 1976-80: THE MINISTERS BEGAN THE COUNCIL SESSION BY CONSIDERING THE COMMISSION-PROPOSED PRIORITIES FOR THE COMMUNITY'S JOINT RESEARCH CENTER. WHILE OUR SOURCES INDICATE THERE WAS GENERAL AGREEMENT WITH THE PRIORITIES AS SET FORTH BY THE COMMISSION (NAMELY, ACTIVITIES RELATED TO NUCLEAR SAFETY, ENERGY-RELATED RESEARCH AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS OF ENERGY PRODUCTION), A SOMETIMES HEATED DEBATE DEVELOPED BETWEEN THOSE EC MEMBER STATES WITH EXTENSIVE NATIONAL RESEARCH CAPABILITIES AND THE SMALLER MEMBER STATES WHICH DO NOT HAVE SUCH CAPABILITIES. THE BENELUX, IRELAND AND ITALY POINTED TO THE VALUE OF JOINT RESEARCH UNDERTAKING, WITH THE DUTCH MAINTAINING THAT WITH ALL OTHER THINGS BEING EQUAL, JOINT RESEARCH WAS PREFERABLE TO NATIONAL RESEARCH. OTHER MEMBER STATES URGED IMPROVED EFFECTIVENESS IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF INFORMATION FROM JOINT PROGRAMS.

4. THE LARGER MEMBER STATES QUESTIONED THE SIZE OF PROPOSED EXPENDITURES FOR THE JOINT RESEARCH CENTER. UK MINISTER CARMICHAEL NOTED THAT BRITISH CALCULATIONS INDICATED THAT RESEARCH UNDERTAKEN AT THE JRC WAS TWO AND ONE HALF TIMES AS EXPENSIVE AS SIMILAR RESEARCH UNDERTAKEN IN THE UNITED KINGDOM. CARMICHAEL REQUESTED THAT THE EC COMMISSION PROVIDE THE COUNCIL WITH FIGURES AS TO:

- 1) THE COST OF TOTAL CLOSURE OF THE EC'S JOINT RESEARCH EFFORTS;
- 2) THE COST OF CUTTING THE JRC BACK FROM ITS PRESENT 22 PROGRAMS TO 10 PROGRAMS AND 3) THE COST OF CUTTING BACK FROM THE PRESENT LEVEL OF 1900 EMPLOYEES LEVEL TO APPROXIMATELY 1100 EMPLOYEES.

CARMICHAEL EMPHASIZED THAT HMG WAS NOT TAKING A POSITION ON THESE PROPOSALS YET BUT MERELY WANTED THE MINISTERS TO HAVE THE FIGURES.

5. THE GERMAN DELEGATION SECONDED THE BRITISH CONCERN WITH REGARD TO THE COSTS OF THE JRC NOTING THAT STAFF COSTS ACCOUNT FOR NEARLY 80 PERCENT OF JRC EXPENDITURES WHEREAS IN SIMILAR ESTABLISHMENTS WITHIN GERMANY STAFF COSTS REPRESENT ONLY ONE HALF OF THE TOTAL BUDGET

6. THE BELGIAN REPRESENTATIVE EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE DROP IN THE PROPORTION OF RESEARCH UNDERTAKEN DIRECTLY IN THE JOINT RESEARCH CENTER AS OPPOSED TO PROJECTS WHICH WERE CONTRACTED OUT UNDER JRC SUPERVISION AND PARTIALLY PAID FOR BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBER STATES. HE URGED GREATER EMPHASIS ON DIRECT RESEARCH, NOTING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAT RESULTS OF RESEARCH UNDERTAKEN INDIRECTLY WERE OFTEN NOT MADE FULLY AVAILABLE TO ALL OF THE SUPPORTING EC MEMBER STATES. THE GERMAN DELEGATION DISPUTED THIS, SAYING THAT RESEARCH PROJECTS SHOULD NOT BE ASSIGNED ON THE BASIS OF POLITICS, BUT RATHER ON THE BASIS OF TECHNICAL KNOW-HOW AND COST EFFECTIVENESS.

7. AS A RESULT OF THE MINISTERS' DISCUSSIONS, THE EC COMMISSION WILL REVISE ITS MULTIANNUL PROPOSAL AND SUBMIT IT TO THE NEXT

RESEARCH COUNCIL WHICH IS LIKELY TO BE HELD IN FEBRUARY.

8. JOINT EUROPEAN TORUS (JET): THE COMMISSION HAD PROPOSED THAT THE COUNCIL TAKE A DECISION IN PRINCIPLE TO GO AHEAD WITH A MULTI-ANNUAL PROGRAM OF COMMUNITY RESEARCH ON CONTROLLED THERMONUCLEAR FUSION AND PLASMA PHYSICS. CENTRAL TO THIS PROGRAM WOULD BE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE JOINT EUROPEAN TORUS, AS DESCENDANT OF THE TOKAMAK PLASMA VESSEL. WHILE ALL DELEGATIONS WERE FAVORABLY DISPOSED, THE MINISTERS WERE UNABLE TO REACH AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE ON THE JET PROJECT. THE ITALIAN DELEGATION INSISTED THAT THEY WERE UNABLE TO AGREE TO THE JET IN PRINCIPLE WITHOUT A SIMULTANEOUS DECISION AS TO ITS PLACEMENT. THEY, ALONG WITH THE COMMISSION, FAVORED LOCATING THE JET IN THE JRC FACILITY IN ISPRA WHILE THE BRITISH PUSHED FOR ITS LOCATION AT CULHAM AND THE GERMANS FOR KARLSRUHE. NUMEROUS COMPROMISES WERE OFFERED BUT TO NO AVAIL.

9. DURING THE COURSE OF THE DEBATE, THE FRENCH PROPOSED CUTTING BACK THE 246 MILLION U.A. REQUESTED BY THE COMMISSION FOR THERMONUCLEAR FUSION RESEARCH FOR THE PERIOD 1976-80 TO A MAXIMUM OF 220 MILLION U.A. THE GERMANS SAID THAT THEY WOULD BE PREPARED TO SEE COMMUNITY EXPENDITURES REACH A LEVEL OF 235 MILLION U.A. BUT THAT THEY SHOULD GO NO HIGHER. (INCLUDED IN THIS FIGURE WOULD BE 101 MILLION U.A. FOR THE COMMUNITY'S SHARE OF THE JET.)

10. THE COUNCIL REFERRED THE ENTIRE THERMONUCLEAR RESEARCH PROGRAM TO THE COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES (COREPER) FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION. WHAT SUCCESS THIS WILL HAVE IS, HOWEVER, NOT CERTAIN AS THE ITALIANS APPEAR TO BE FIRMLY COMMITTED TO HAVING THE JET SET UP AT ISPRA WHILE THE OTHER MEMBER STATES DISLIKE "NEGOTIATING WITH A GUN TO THEIR HEADS."

11. AFTER AGREEING TO DISAGREE ABOUT THE JET, THE MINISTERS GAVE UP AND DID NOT EVEN ATTEMPT TO FINISH THE REST OF THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AGENDA WHICH CONTAINED PROPOSALS ON BIOLOGICAL RESEARCH, THE ENVIRONMENT AND RADIATION PROTECTION.

12. THE EC DRAGON REACTOR: EARLY IN THE COUNCIL SESSION THE PRESS SPOKESMAN OF THE FRG DELEGATION SAID THAT UNDER THE HEADING "OTHER BUSINESS" THE GERMANS INTENDED TO MAKE A STATEMENT WITH REGARD TO THE EC'S DYING DRAGON REACTOR PROJECT. LATER, HOWEVER, THE SPOKESMAN SAID THAT THE DELEGATION'S INSTRUCTIONS HAD BEEN CHANGED AND THAT NO SUCH STATEMENT WOULD BE MADE. AS IT TURNED OUT, THE MINISTERS DID NOT GET TO THE "OTHER BUSINESS" AGENDA ITEM AND THE DRAGON WAS, ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES, NOT DISCUSSED. THE COUNCIL'S FAILURE TO TAKE POSITIVE ACTION IN SUPPORT OF THE DRAGON MEANS THAT FUNDING FOR THE PROJECT WILL LAPSE. MORRIS

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